

**Title:** **Solicitation of Interest (SOI) # 1136**  
**Socialization Skills Services for Children who are Legally Blind**

**Agency:** Children & Family Services, NYS Office of  
Bureau of Contract Management

**Contract Number:** TBD

**Contract term:** 5/1/2024 – 4/30/2029

**Date of issue:** 9/13/2023

**Due date/time:** **10/25/2023 by 4:00 PM Eastern Time**

**Location:** Statewide

**Counties:** Statewide

### **Background**

The New York State Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS) announces a Solicitation of Interest (SOI) for qualified entities that provide a wide array of socialization skills programs for children who are legally blind, that will help develop and reinforce their social skills, independence, confidence, and self-esteem. These programs may take place after school, on weekends, on a year-round basis, or during school vacations; they may be residential or day programs. Please see the **Eligibility Criteria** section for additional information.

This advertisement is public notice that OCFS is seeking to contract with organizations to provide a wide array of socialization skills programs for children who are legally blind, that will help develop and reinforce their social skills, independence, confidence, and self-esteem.

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) is the State entity designated to provide services to New Yorkers who are legally blind. In recognition of the need for early intervention and expansion of educational and social opportunities outside of school for children who are legally blind, NYSCB sponsors Socialization Skills Services Programs to provide socialization experiences. The programs teach and reinforce rehabilitation and social skills, which ultimately teaches skills that will enable youth to be successful in future employment endeavors.

Participation in social activities during the formative years has a significant and positive impact on basic health and fitness, intellectual growth, and social and emotional development. NYSCB Socialization Skills Services Programs provide needed services, training, and critical support to address a wide range of needs for youth who are legally blind, and helps prepare them to become well-adjusted, productive citizens which assists them in their eventual attainment of gainful employment. Participation in the programs also increases the ability of children who are legally blind to integrate and function independently in social environments. Please see the **Scope of Work** section for

additional information.

The purpose of this SOI is to invite any eligible and interested entities that believe they can satisfy this program's needs to inform OCFS by a Letter of Interest (LOI). To be considered responsive, your organization's LOI should be received no later than the deadline specified on the first page of this announcement. Please see the **How to Respond** section for additional information and submission requirements.

Through this announcement, OCFS is exploring the availability of vendors who have the expertise to provide the services required by OCFS. NYSCB seeks to contract with all organizations eligible to provide these services based on the criteria outlined in this announcement.

### **Scope of Work**

Funded organizations will provide socialization skills programs in one or more of the following program areas for children who are legally blind:

1. Life Skills – development of communications and social aptitude, appropriate dress and personal hygiene, food preparation, currency recognition and financial aptitude, and use of public transportation.
2. Career Exploration – investigation of vocational options and interests, how to write a resume, learning about job interviews, and career discussions.
3. Technology Training – exploration of individual adaptive technology needs, keyboard skills, and Internet usage.
4. Social Events – development of motor skills through dance and music, mapping skills exercises, field trips that build orientation and mobility training, etc.

The desired goals for each of the programs are to increase socialization skills, independence, confidence, and self-esteem of youth participants in social settings. Goals may vary from one program to another but must be tailored to the individual needs of each legally blind child that is referred by OCFS/NYSCB.

Referrals of NYSCB participants to funded organizations will be made in accordance with federal regulation "Title 34 → Subtitle B → Chapter III → [Part 361.52 Informed Choice](#)" that requires the participant to select the vendors based upon information/options provided by NYSCB. There is no guarantee of the number of referrals and/or revenue from any award pursuant to this SOI. The amount of service utilization is contingent upon public need and consumer choice, which may vary.

### **Referrals and Program Termination**

Funded organizations agree to accept all legally blind children referred from NYSCB in their program(s). Lists of children signed up to attend weeklong programs will be sent to the NYSCB Coordinator of Children and Transition Services. For weekend or daily programs, lists of children signed up to attend should be sent to the referring counselor. If, after commencement of the program, the Contractor determines a referred legally blind child is unlikely to benefit from the program, the Contractor may not refuse services or terminate the child's participation in the program without first contacting the NYSCB

counselor who referred the child and obtaining agreement from the NYSCB counselor that termination of the child from the program would be in the best interest of the child and/or of the other participants.

### Residential/Overnight Programs

If the funded organization offers residential/overnight programs, the funded organization agrees to provide all meals for each participant for the duration of the program, to provide safe and comfortable lodging or sleeping accommodations for each participant for the duration of the program, and to provide on-site overnight supervision accessible to all participants each night of the program. All program areas must be accessible to, and accommodated for, legally blind individuals.

### Integrated Programs

While NYSCB encourages integration of legally blind children into programs with sighted children, the funded organization must notify the NYSCB Central Office Children's Services Coordinator no later than thirty (30) days in advance of any programs in which legally blind children are integrated with children who are sighted and are not family members.

No program will be allowed which integrates legally blind children with non-family members who are 18 years of age or older. However, children with multiple disabilities may be referred into the program up to the age of 22. These individuals may be integrated into the program as if they were under 18.

Multiple disabilities according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA), refers to "concomitant [simultaneous] impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment, etc.), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness."

### Staff Qualifications

All staff of the funded organization who are providing services must possess the following qualifications:

- capable of working with the unique needs of legally blind children;
- demonstrable knowledge and understanding of the effects of vision loss; and
- demonstrable specific skills required to deliver instruction to legally blind children in the specialized areas of the funded organization's programs.

When the funded organization experiences any change in staff providing services pursuant to this project during the contract period, the funded organization must submit curriculum vitae for all staff providing services under the contract to the NYSCB Central Office Children's Services Coordinator, and must obtain prior approval from NYSCB for any related staff assignments.

### Staff Training

All program staff must receive training and orientation prior to the arrival of the first child. Staff training and orientation must include:

- Chain of command
- Reporting illness, injury, or other emergency situations
- Fire drills and evacuation procedures (for residential programs only)

### Confidentiality

The funded organization will safeguard the confidentiality of all information relating to all individuals who participate in programs and shall maintain the confidentiality of all such information in conformity with the provisions of applicable State and Federal laws, rules, and regulations. The funded organization shall not maintain any identifiable records for any program participant other than emergency contact information and Program Summary Reports.

### Records

Upon conclusion of each program, the funded organization must submit a Program Summary Report to the NYSCB Central Office Coordinator of Children and Transition Services. The Program Summary Report shall contain, at a minimum: (1) the dates of the program; (2) a summary description of the program activities for the period; (3) the names of all participants referred by NYSCB (including family members, where appropriate); (4) the total number of participants (if the program was an integrated program).

Upon conclusion of each program, the funded organization must submit a Per-Student Report to the NYSCB District Office(s) which referred the participant(s). The Per-Student Report shall contain, at a minimum: (1) the dates of the program; (2) a summary description of the program activities for the period; (3) the goals achieved by the participant during the program.

The Contractor agrees to maintain accurate, complete, and separate accounting and fiscal records, and to meet all state and federal reporting requirements. The Contractor agrees to retain such records for the balance of the calendar year in which they were made, and for six (6) additional years thereafter. Such records shall be subject to audit by NYSCB, the Office of Children and Family Services, the Office of State Comptroller, or any other party authorized by federal or state law or regulation.

### Eligibility Criteria

Interested parties who meet the following criteria are eligible to respond:

- Agree to provide the services requested by this SOI in the **Scope of Work** section
- Have a minimum of three (3) years' experience providing socialization services or similar services to youth with disabilities and/or youth who are legally blind in New

York AND have key staff members who possess the qualifications to deliver the services described in the **Scope of Work** section. This must be documented in your Letter of Interest and/or by the provision of staff resumes.

- Be registered in New York State as a not-for-profit entity.
- Propose to provide socialization skills programs for children who are legally blind in **one or more** of the following programs and explain in your Letter of Interest how each service, activity, or instructional area will actively engage the child.:
  - (a) Life Skills – development of communications and social aptitude, appropriate dress and personal hygiene, food preparation, currency recognition and financial aptitude, and use of public transportation.
  - (b) Career Exploration – investigation of vocational options and interests, how to write a resume, learning about job interviews, and career discussions.
  - (c) Technology Training – exploration of individual adaptive technology needs, keyboard skills, and Internet usage.
  - (d) Social Events – development of motor skills through dance and music, mapping skills exercises, skill-building field trips, etc.
- Agree to provide a cost per child to attend the proposed socialization program(s).
- Agree to provide on-site overnight supervision accessible to all participants each night of the program (applicable only to residential/overnight programs). If yes, please provide a brief description of the on-site overnight supervision in your Letter of Interest.
- Provide the project site address where the services/activities will take place and describe your plan for orientation of the child to the program site in your Letter of Interest.
- Be eligible to do business with New York State.

### **Funding Details**

This SOI is being released for the purpose of gathering information on existing socialization programs that currently operate statewide. A response to this SOI may result in a contract or agreement with NYSCB in the future. OCFS/NYSCB does not guarantee any specific level of income or any specific level of referrals as a result of responding to this SOI.

NYSCB intends to award multiple fee-based contracts throughout the state totaling approximately \$300,000 per year in response to this SOI. Referral of children to funded organizations will be based on need and availability, and the cost per child. There is no guarantee of referrals and/or revenues from any contract awarded pursuant to this SOI.

Funding for this project is contingent upon the availability of funds in the state and/or federal budgets, the number of interested and eligible parties that respond to this solicitation, and the number of participants in need of socialization services.

Individual contract values will be determined based upon the following factors which include and are not limited to:

- Geographic region
- Population of anticipated region
- Historical numbers or consumers per region

Services provided under contracts resulting from this SOI will be used on an as-needed basis, as authorized by the NYSCB District office. Payment for these services is upon NYSCB's approval of the Service Authorization form and based upon the original per child cost proposed.

The organization must propose an annual cost to NYSCB for delivery of the Socialization Programs for Legally Blind Students, for the five (5) year term of the contract resulting from this SOI. The cost proposal must contain:

1. Cost per child to attend the proposed socialization programs;
2. The minimum number of referrals (if any) the organization will accept yearly from NYSCB;
3. The maximum number of referrals (if any) the funded organization will accept yearly from NYSCB.

The funded organization will be paid upon submission of a completed Service Authorization form along with the required reports to the NYSCB Central Office Coordinator of Children and Transition Services, approval by the NYSCB Central Office of the payment request and report, and approval and processing of the payment voucher by the New York State Office of the State Comptroller.

The funded organization may not request nor accept payments from any NYSCB participant or other individual or entity for any services provided under the contracts resulting from this SOI.

NOTE: OCFS/NYSCB does not guarantee any specific level of income or any specific level of referrals in any of the contracts resulting from this SOI.

### **Term of Contract**

Contract(s) awarded in response to this solicitation will be for five (5) years. The anticipated start date is 5/1/2024, and the anticipated end date is 4/30/2029. Funding is anticipated to be available for the first year of the contract. The award of a contract does not guarantee that funding will be available for subsequent years. Contractors may not begin providing services before the contract start date; OCFS has no obligation to pay for services rendered before the New York State Office of the State Comptroller and the Office of the Attorney General approve the contract.

## **How to Respond**

To be considered responsive, interested parties should complete and submit all required documents in conformance with the format and content requirements as explained. A response that does not provide all the information requested may be subject to rejection. The response should contain sufficient information to assure OCFS of its accuracy. The information provided should, wherever possible, verify that your organization meets the requirements in the **Eligibility Criteria** section of this solicitation.

**Responses must be emailed to [RFP@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:RFP@ocfs.ny.gov) and should be received by the due date and time specified on the first page of this announcement.**

**Interested parties should complete and provide the following documents:**

- **Attachment 1 – Letter of Interest**
- **Attachment 2 – Submission Checklist**
- If available: any current service pamphlet or brochure related to this project.
- If available: sample template of a Per-Student Report to be performed at the completion of the socialization skills program.
- If applicable: resumes that demonstrate key staff members possess the necessary experience and qualifications to deliver these services.
- If applicable: copies of the required license, certification, or other relevant supporting documentation to demonstrate compliance with the requirement(s) of the state in which the applicant's program resides.

Additionally, each interested party may provide the following optional documents:

- [OCFS-2647, EO 177 Certification](#)
- [OCFS-4821, CMS User Authorization](#)

The subject line of the email submission of your response should include the following information: **SOI # 1136 Socialization Skills Services for Children who are Legally Blind**. Additionally, please clearly identify the vendor's name in the body of the email and in the filenames of attached documents to ensure your submission is processed efficiently. **Early submissions are encouraged as late responses may be subject to rejection.**

Please limit your Letter of Interest to a recommended maximum of 20 page(s), Arial 12-point font, single line spacing and one-inch margins. Applicants will not be penalized for exceeding this page limit. Please see the **Attachment 1 – Letter of Interest** provided for your reference.

OCFS will provide a confirmation email that the submission has been received. OCFS will not be liable for any costs incurred by interested parties in the preparation of documents submitted in response to this solicitation. Vendors may modify, in writing, or withdraw the content of any submission at any time prior to the due date and time.

## **Questions**

Questions should be submitted via e-mail to [RFP@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:RFP@ocfs.ny.gov) prior to the due date and time specified on the first page of this announcement. The subject line should include the following information: **SOI # 1136 Socialization Skills Services for Children who are Legally Blind**. Please submit your question(s) with adequate time for response. OCFS recommends allowing at least five (5) business days. **Late questions may not be addressed.**

## **Evaluation Process**

An internal review by OCFS will confirm eligibility. This solicitation is not a guarantee or promise of funding. Available funding to support this initiative will be limited to the amount(s) appropriated in the enacted budget for this purpose and will be awarded among those interested organizations who are deemed to meet the eligibility requirements and are determined by OCFS to be suited for the program/initiative.

OCFS may require additional information from an organization before deciding whether the interested organization is eligible and can supply the requested commodities or services. If OCFS requests additional information, it must be provided within five (5) business days from request or as otherwise directed in the request.

Upon determination of eligibility, OCFS will notify eligible organizations of their status and the proposed award amount (if any). OCFS will also request a work plan and budget with justifications in addition to other completed documents necessary to develop contracts.

Awards are contingent upon vendors maintaining and certifying a [Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire](#). Vendors must be found responsible and cannot be listed on the OGS prohibited vendors list.

## **OCFS Reserved Rights**

OCFS reserves the right to withdraw, amend or postpone this solicitation, without notice, and without liability, to any applicant, or other party, and may exercise these rights at any time. In addition, OCFS reserves the right to:

- place a monetary cap on the funding amount made in each contract award;
- change any of the schedule dates stated in the solicitation;
- make an award under this solicitation in whole or in part;
- disqualify any applicant whose conduct and/or LOI fails to conform to the requirements of this solicitation;
- reject any LOI if, in the sole discretion of OCFS, it determines the applicant is not a responsible vendor;
- request all applicants who submitted LOIs to present supplemental information clarifying their proposals either in writing or by formal presentation;
- direct all organizations who submitted LOIs to prepare modifications addressing solicitation amendments;
- make funding decisions that maximize compliance with and address the outcomes



identified in this solicitation;

- fund only one portion, or selected activities, of the selected applicant's LOI and/or adopt all or part of the selected applicant's LOI based on federal and state requirements;
- eliminate any solicitation requirements unmet by all applicants, upon notice to all parties that submitted LOIs;
- waive procedural technicalities, or modify minor irregularities, in LOI received, after notification to the applicant involved;
- correct any arithmetic errors in any proposal, or make typographical corrections to LOIs, with the concurrence of the applicant;
- negotiate with the eligible applicant(s) prior to contract award;
- require that all LOIs be held valid for a minimum of 180 days from the closing date for receipt of applications, unless otherwise expressly provided for in writing;
- fund any or all of the LOIs received in response to this solicitation. However, issuance of this solicitation does not commit OCFS to fund any proposals. OCFS can reject any proposals submitted;
- use the LOI submitted in response to this solicitation as part of an approved contract. At the time of contract development, awardees may be asked to provide additional budget and program information for the final contract;
- utilize any and all ideas submitted in the LOI received where an award is ultimately made;
- make inquiries of third parties, including but not limited to applicant's references, regarding the applicant's experience or other matters deemed relevant by OCFS. By submitting an LOI in response to this solicitation, the applicant gives its consent to any inquiry made by OCFS;
- where applicable, require contractors to participate in a formal evaluation of the program to be developed by OCFS. Contractors may be required to collect data for these purposes. The evaluation design will maintain participants' confidentiality and recognize practical constraints of collecting this kind of information;
- when applicable, consider statewide distribution and regional distribution within New York City, including borough distribution methodology, in evaluating proposals; and
- reject any extraneous terms, alternate activities/work to be performed, added conditions, or exceptions stated by applicants within their LOI. This includes, but is not limited to, proposed changes to the standard terms and conditions of the resulting contract(s).

### **Contract Documents**

Interested parties must review the contract terms and conditions of the contract template provided below.

The contract documents consist of the following:

1. Face Page
2. Signatory Page
3. NYS Standard Terms and Conditions (State of New York Master Contract for Grants)
4. Master Contract Attachment A-1 (Agency-Specific Terms and Conditions)
5. Master Contract Attachment A-2 (Federally Funded Grants)

6. Master Contract Attachment B: Budget and Instructions
7. Master Contract Attachment C: Work Plan
8. Master Contract Attachment D: Payment and Reporting Schedule
9. Master Contract Attachment E: Federal Fund Vendor Determination
10. Attachment MWBE: Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises

A copy of the NYS Standard Terms and Conditions (State of New York Master Contract for Grants) with attachments can be found on the OCFS public website:

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/docs/Grant-Contract-Template-Federal.pdf>

In addition, the following documents may be required prior to contracting:

- [Vendor Responsibility Questionnaire](#) (if applicable)
- [Proof of Workers' Compensation Insurance](#) (if applicable)
- [Proof of Disability Benefits Coverage](#) (if applicable)
- [Attachment A-2, Federal Assurance and Certifications](#) (if applicable)
- [OCFS-4631, MWBE Utilization Plan Form](#) (if applicable)
- [OCFS-4629, Project Staffing Plan Form](#)
- [OCFS-3460, Equal Employment Opportunity \(EEO\) Policy Statement](#)

### **Diversity**

OCFS is committed to identifying, addressing, and reducing disproportionality and to eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in our systems of care and custody. Authentic partnerships and joint decision-making with families and communities promote social justice and race equity to address disproportionality and disparities in the provision of services to children and families. OCFS strongly encourages qualified minority-owned, women-owned, and veteran-owned businesses to submit a letter of interest in response to this announcement.

### **Contact Information**

#### **Primary contact:**

Director of Contracts  
NYS Office of Children & Family Services  
52 Washington Street  
Room 202S – Procurement Unit  
Rensselaer, NY 12144  
[RFP@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:RFP@ocfs.ny.gov)

#### **Submit to contact:**

Director of Contracts  
Office of Children & Family Services  
52 Washington Street  
Room 202S – Procurement Unit  
Rensselaer, NY 12144  
[RFP@ocfs.ny.gov](mailto:RFP@ocfs.ny.gov)

## **Attachments**

Please see the following attachments to this announcement, which are available on the New York State Contract Reporter website at <https://www.nyscr.ny.gov> or the OCFS website at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/contracts/funding/>.

- **Attachment 1 – Letter of Interest\***
- **Attachment 2 – Submission Checklist\***

\* Attachments marked with an asterisk **must** be completed and included with your response submission.